

Chapter I

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Introduction

Gender studies is an academic area of study that critically evaluates how gender shapes the identities and social interactions across the world. It is an interdisciplinary area of learning that emphasizes on the complex interactions of gender with other intersections such as race, ethnicity, sexuality, nation, and religion. As an interesting and important field, gender studies render chances to explore the political, cultural, and social constructions of gender. The disciplines that vastly accords to gender studies include the fields of literature and linguistics, history and political science, cinema and musicology, archeology, human development, public health, economics etc. However these branches sometimes differ in their approaches in the ideologies of why and how gender is studied.

The term 'gender' in gender studies, often represents the societal and cultural construction of masculinity and femininity, and not to the biological state of being male or female. 'Sex' and 'gender' are two significantly different terminologies. Sex is the physical differentiation between the biological male and female. When a baby is born, it is labeled 'boy' or 'girl' depending on the sex. The basis of such characterization is made on the appearance of the external genitals. But the ideology of gender is entirely divergent from that of sex. It is a social construct and has nothing to do with biological traits. Gender delineates the distinction between men and women in social terms. There are pre- assigned behavioural patterns and characteristics categorized as 'masculine' and 'feminine'. Men are meant to be the dominant primary gender and women are supposed to be the submissive second gender. It further explicates the privileges of being a male and the limitations of being a female in the society. Individuals enter into the periphery of gender categories right from birth. Gender roles and expectations

may vary across cultures. Gender studies include women's studies, men's studies, and queer studies.

Queer studies is an academic field of study that focuses on concerns related to human sexuality, sexual orientation with emphasis on LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) as well as asexual, pansexual, intersex, gender questioning, gender fluid people, and their culture. As an aftermath of queer and women's studies, there emerged a critical study in the 1900s, called the 'queer theory'. It is a study associated with the theorization of sexual and gender spectrum. Queer theory questioned the deep rooted binary gender ideologies and the societal notion that only heterosexuality is normal, natural, and perfect. Queer theory is a reverberation of critical and cultural contexts including feminism, post- structuralism, radical movements, gay- lesbian movements, and many sexual subcultural practices like masochism and sadomasochism. Teresa de Lauretis, an Italian author and Professor Emerita was considered to be the founder of queer theory. She first used the term in her work titled *Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities*, in the journal *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* in the year 1991. Lauretis argues that heterosexuality cannot be considered as a benchmark for sexual formations and gender categorizations.

Some of the core theorists in the development of queer theory include Michael Foucault, Gayle Rubin, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and Judith Butler. Michael Foucault's work on sexuality states that it was a discursive production rather than an essential part of a human, which came from his larger idea of power not being repressive and negative as productive and generative. In other words, power acts to make sexuality seem like a hidden truth that must be dug out and be made specific. Foucault refuses to accept that sexuality can be clearly defined, and instead focuses on the expansive production of sexuality within governments of power and knowledge.

Gayle Rubin's essay *Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality* is often identified as one of the fundamental texts, and it continues Foucault's rejection of biological explanations of sexuality by thinking about the way that sexual identities as well as behaviours are hierarchically organized through systems of sexual classifications. She demonstrates in her essay the way that certain sexual expressions are made more valuable than others, and by doing that, allowing those who are outside of these parameters to be oppressed. Rubin also argued against the feminist belief that through gender, sexuality was obtained or the belief that gender and sexuality are the same.

The theorist most commonly identified with studying the prevailing understandings of gender and sex is Judith Butler, who draws much from Foucault's ideas but with a focus on gender. She argues in her book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity* that gender, like sexuality, is not an essential truth obtained from one's body but something that is acted out and portrayed as 'reality'. She reasons that the strict belief in the truth about sex makes heterosexuality as the only proper outcome because of the coherent binary created of 'feminine' and 'masculine' and thus creating the only logical outcome of either being a 'male' or 'female'. Butler makes the case that gender performativity could be a strategy of resistance with examples such as drag, cross-dressing, and the sexual non-realistic depiction of 'butch' and 'femme' identities that poke fun at the laid out gender norms in society. In her later book, *Undoing Gender*, Butler makes it clear that performativity is not the same as performance. She explains that gender performativity is a repeated process that ultimately creates the subject as a subject. Butler's work brings to light the creation of gender contesting the rigidity of the hierarchical binaries that exist and is what makes her work invaluable in queer theory.

A wing of queer studies, dedicated to analyze the sexual construct, orientation, identity, expression, physical, and psychological traits of the third gender is called the transgender studies. Transgenders are people who transcend the categories of male-female and masculine- feminine concepts. The bodies and ontology of such people diverge from the sexual dimorphism commonly found and accepted in the society. The term 'transgender' has come into widespread use only in the past couple of decades. It refers to people who move away from the sex assigned at birth and cross over the boundaries constructed by their culture to define and contain that gender. Individuals with gender incongruity tend to undergo Sex Reassignment Surgeries (SRS) because they strongly feel that they belong to the other gender and it would be better for them to live according to their psychological construct.

There is a widespread notion that gender identity is the subjective sense of being a woman or a man or both or neither that is rooted in biology though there exists many hypothetical theories, none of them till date has scientifically proven the biological cause of gender incongruity. No child is born in this world with a pre-determined gender identity or orientation. Joan Rough Garden, an evolutionary biologist suggests a learned versus innate way of gender identity development in her book *Evolution's Rainbow: Diversity, Gender, and Sexuality in Nature and People*

I envision gender identity as a cognitive lens. When a baby opens his or her eyes after birth and looks around, whom will the baby emulate and whom will he or she merely notice? Perhaps a male baby will emulate his father or other men, perhaps not, and a female baby her mother or other women, perhaps not.

I imagine that a lens in the brain controls who to focus on as a "tutor."

Transgender identity is then the acceptance of a tutor from the opposite sex.

Degrees of transgender identity and of gender variance generally, reflect

different degrees of single- mindedness in the selection of the tutor's gender. The development of gender identity thus depends on both brain state and early postnatal experience, because brain state indicates what the lens is, and environmental experience supplies the image to be photographed through that lens and ultimately developed immutably into brain circuitry. Once gender identity is set, like other basic aspects of temperament, life proceeds from there. (244)

Garden states that third gender is a phenomenon that is not only found among humans but also in hundreds of animal species. For example, red deer has two male morphs, one with antlers and one without, known as 'hummels' or 'notts'. Several species of fish such as 'plainfin midshipman' fish and 'coho salmon' have more than two genders. Anthropologists have described that there are gender categories in some cultures which they could not explain using a two gender framework. Contemporary gender theorists argue that a binary gender system is neither innate nor universal.

J N Zhou a neuroscientist published his research article *A Sex Difference in the Human Brain And its Relation to Transsexuality* in 1995 in the journal named *Nature* proving that a trans woman's brain structure, its volume, and density of neurons is similar to that of a cisgender woman and not like a biological male. Likewise a trans man's brain structure is similar to that of a biological male even before using hormonal therapy and sex change surgeries. Several studies have found a correlation between gender identity and brain structure. There is a region in the human brain called the 'Bed Nucleus of the Stria Terminalis' (BNST), a region known for sex and anxiety responses. Male-to-female trans women have a female- normal BNST size and female- to- male men have male-normal size. Certain individuals with gender incongruence were diagnosed with Gender Identity Disorder (DIG) only when their

emotions end up in extreme distress and certain physical health deteriorations. This distress is referred to as gender dysphoria and it may manifest as depression, inability to trust people, or form a healthy relationship with others.

Over the past centuries, various terms are used to label people with gender incongruity. One of the earlier usages was the term 'hermaphrodite' which is derived from the Greek word 'hermaphroditus', which means 'partly male, partly female'. According to Greek mythology, Hermaphroditus was the god of hermaphrodites and effeminates. He was a son of Hermes, the Olympian god of trade and Aphrodite, goddess of love and fertility. It was believed that Hermaphroditus had both penis and breasts. Not only in Greek mythology, references of gods and other mystical beings with both female and male attributes can also be found in ancient Egyptian, Mesopotamian and Roman civilizations. In the beginning of 21st century, Western medical practitioners labeled people with gender differences as 'intersex'. They grouped intersex people as individuals with Disorders with Sex Development (DSD). The term was offensive to many because 'disorder' sounded as if the person was described as mentally sick. The American historian Susan Stryker pointed this in her book *Transgender History: The Roots of Today's Revolution* as a 'violation' of an individual's being.

Transgenders in one form or the other have been an integral part of the society from time immemorial. References about them are found even in the Vedas, epics and works of many ancient civilizations like the Chinese, the Japanese, the Roman, the Egyptian, the Mesopotamian, the Babylonian, the Arcadian etc. Transgenders are also referred to in the medieval period of world history. In many early civilizations the existence of transgender people were considered natural. During the medieval period trans people were even given primary posts and positions of high ranks in the government and society by the rulers of the period. This trend continued till the end of

the eighteenth century by which time England had established its sovereignty over a major part of the world which later came to be known as 'the empire where the sun never set'. It was during the time of Queen Victoria that the double standards of life, hypocrisy, and pretensions enveloped the societies under the British rule and since then the position and the status of transgender community deteriorated and by the dawn of 20th century they had become a criminalized and discriminated lot. They had to go to underground and hide their identity. However they have now begun to come out in public and flaunt their identity in the society, fighting for their rights without a hint of shame or guilt which was imposed on them. Though it cannot be denied that they are succeeding to a great extent in their fight to get accepted by the governments of many countries, they are still in the psychological periphery of society. It is this marginalization that the transgenders are fighting against. They are struggling to be accepted into the mainstream life.

Gender identity refers to the personal sense of an individual's own gender. Because in certain individuals there might be a difference in their biological sex and gender construct. A person's gender identity is how they internally identify themselves and express that externally. Usually people use outfits, appearances, expressions, and behavior to express the gender they identify with. However gender is more like a spectrum and it cannot be neatly divided along the binary lines of 'man' and 'woman'. The concepts and terms that refer to gender identity are changing continually as people's perceptions evolve and it is important to know the classifications of gender.

There are four common classifications of gender that can be applied to living and non-living beings: masculine gender which denotes the male subtype, feminine gender that denotes the female subtype, neuter gender that denotes non-living and

lifeless things. Neuter means neither; it is neither male nor female and common gender that indicate either male or female sex. Certain people refuse to be classified into male or female categories because they do not identify as one or they may be in transition from one to the other. But there exists other broader categories of gender.

Cisgenderers are people who identify themselves with the sex assigned at birth. There will be an alignment between their biological sex and perceived gender identity. Cisgender is the most common gender identified in the society. An agender person does not identify with any gender. Some agender people describe their condition as having a lack of gender while others label themselves as being gender neutral. They strive to portray themselves as androgynous. A gender fluid person's gender identity varies over time. The variation can happen occasionally, every day, every month, to even every few moments a day depending upon the person's situation and moods. For an outsider a gender fluid person's change of identity may feel dramatic but conversions are like a response to different circumstances.

Multigender is a term used to label people who experience more than one gender identity. Multigender people may experience two or more gender identities at the same time, or their gender identity may change over time. The gender identities they experience may sometimes be male, female, non-binary, or genderless. A genderqueer person may identify as male or female, as between or beyond genders, or as a mix of the two. They often exhibit gender fluidity. The term genderqueer is also used to refer for individuals who are open about their sexual orientation as non-heterosexuals. Intersex refers to people with a rare medical condition in which they are born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that does not seem to fit into male or female traits. For example, a girl maybe born with large clitoris, or lack a vaginal opening, or a boy

maybe born with small penis, or with a scrotum that is divided that seems more like a labia. Cases have been recorded about men with a uterus and menstruate every month. Transgender, often shortened as trans, is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity differs from the sex assigned at birth. Some transgender people, who desire to change their sex, undergo sex reassignment surgery, hormone replacement therapy, vocal cord surgeries, implantations etc. Not every transgender individual undergoes all these treatments, some people prefer not to undergo surgery and some others due to low financial standards.

There are certain other categories that have been included under the transgender umbrella, one of which is 'transvestite'. A transvestite is a person who cross dress or prefer wearing clothes of the opposite sex. The term transvestite is used as a synonym for 'cross-dresser'. Another category called the 'transsexuals' who identify as or desire to live and be accepted as a member of the opposite sex assigned at birth. Some 'Drag performers' (Drag Kings and Drag Queens) include themselves under the trans umbrella. Drag performers can either be 'male-bodied' or 'female-bodied' individuals or those in transition; they perform on stage the gender opposite to the sex they were born, in an exaggerated fashion. A drag king is a person who was born as a female and performs on stage in a hyper masculine style, while a drag queen is a person born as male and performs on stage in a hyper feminine style. There are people who identify themselves as 'androgynous' and they do not fit under the existing typical male or female categories. Androgynes may identify themselves as beyond gender, between genders, moving across genders, entirely genderless, or any or all of these types. They exhibit a variety of male, female, and other characteristics. The condition of androgynous can either be physical or psychological. Androgynous identity includes pangender, ambigender, non-gendered, and agender, and it does not depend on birth sex.

Transitioning from one gender to another is a complex process. People who transit from one gender identity to another often start by expressing their preferred gender in situations where they feel safe. They typically work up to live as individuals of their preferred gender by making little changes, one at a time. While there is no ‘manual’ or ‘rigid right way’ for gender transitioning, there are common social changes transgender people experiences. They adopt the appearance of the desired sex through changes in clothing and grooming. They prefer to be called by names and pronouns of their preferred sex. They are eager to change the designation on identity documents. Some people undergo hormone therapy and other medical proceedings that can modify their body that matches their gender identity. However, gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same. Sexual orientation refers to an individual’s enduring physical, romantic, and emotional attraction to another person, whereas gender identity refers to one’s internal sense of male, female, or transgender.

In India, transgenders are still a marginalized section of the population with only limited access to education, freedom of speech, identity, and job opportunities. Yet they strive to survive all the adversaries in life. India is a land of diverse culture and customs. Hijra is an umbrella term that denotes Indian trans women. But there are various other terminologies associated with transgender community within India. The term hijra is derived from Semitic- Arabic word ‘hij’, which means ‘to leave one’s tribe’. In the ancient period it was loosely translated to English as ‘eunuchs’. Unlike eunuch not all hijras are castrated and not all castrated men categorize themselves as hijras. Hijras are biological males who reject their masculine identity and identify themselves as women. Transgenders living in the northern side of India are called Kinnars. Hijras in Tamil Nadu are called Aravanis. The word is derived from Hindu mythology and Aravan was a warrior prince of Pandava clan. Hijras who

considers themselves as the wife of aravan were called Aravanis. However these days most transgenders prefer to be called ‘thirunangai’.

Kothis are a heterogeneous group that refers to biological males who exhibit varying degrees of being effeminate. They prefer to take up the feminine lead in same- sex relationships. Shiv- Shakthis are a typical transgender community in Andhra Pradesh. They are men who are believed to be possessed by or married to the gods, especially god Shiva. They have feminine gender expressions and cross- dress as women during temple festivals and rituals. Most Shiv- Shaktis work as astrologers and spiritual healers. The community is guided by gurus who instigate discipline and train them for work. In the states of Maharashtra and Karnataka, Jogtas and Jogtis refer to male and female disciples who dedicate themselves to the goddess Renukha Devi otherwise called Yellamma. Jogti Hijras are male to female trans individuals who serve at the temple of Yellamma.

Indian transgender community was discriminated and subjugated over centuries. They were denied even the bare minimum of rights and liberties. The trans visibility in India is quite remarkable compared to the previous decades. Many trans women and trans men fought strenuously for their rights and made people aware of their plights and necessities. One of the pioneers in Indian trans activism is Kalki Subramaniyam. She is a transgender rights activist, artist, actor, writer and entrepreneur from Tamil Nadu. In 2011, she starred in the Tamil film *Narthagi*. She is the first transgender woman in India to do a lead role in a motion picture. In 2008, she founded the ‘Sahodhari Foundation’, an organization that advocate for transgender people in India. She has post graduate degrees in Mass Communications and International Relations.

Manobi Bandhopadyay is one of the most famous transgender personalities in

India and was the first in her community to earn a Ph.D. An educationist, she was the Associate Professor of Vivekananda Sathobarshiki Mahavidalaya and later became the principal of Krishnagar Women's College. She is immensely loved and respected by her students. Her biography *A Gift Of Goddess Lakshmi* (2017) is a candid biography of India's first transgender principal.

Priya Babu is a trans woman, activist, writer, and counselor. She was abandoned by her parents and ended up begging, club dancing, and sex work. She met Samuthiram, a writer who became an inspiration for her writing career. Motivated by him, Priya Babu wrote novels and short stories and became the first transgender Tamil novelist. In 2001, she filed a petition in Madras High Court to the voting rights of her community and succeeded in getting it. She initiated an association for trans people named 'Thaii'. She was awarded the prestigious Periyar Award and Life Time Achievement Award by the Tamil Nadu government. Six years ago Priya Babu along with three other trans activists started a library named Transgender Resource Centre in Madurai, Tamil Nadu which is a first of its kind in India. Through her documentaries and writings she has been consistently trying to dispel the myths about the trans community. Her latest documentary *Idayinam*, proves her diligence and zeal for her community.

Laxmi Narayan Tripathi is a Mumbai based transgender activist, bharathanatyam dancer, film actress, and writer. She is the first transgender personality to represent the Asia Pacific in the UN General Assembly in the year 2008. At the assembly she spoke about the plight of the third gender in the society. She has authored two books; *Me Laxmi, Me Hijra* (2015) is her autobiography and the second one *Red Lipstick: The Men in My Life* (2016) speaks about the men who influenced in her life.

Madhu Kinnar, belongs to a marginalized community in India. She left her home as a teenager and joined the transgender community. She earned a living by taking up odd jobs, singing, and dancing on the markets of Raigarh, a place in Chhattisgarh. Madhu was a victim of physical and verbal abuse. She decided to retaliate and filed the nomination for the post of Mayor in Raigarh. As an independent candidate she won the election of the Raigarh Municipal Corporation in 2015 by securing 33,168 votes. She is the first transgender person to become a mayor in India. Her life set a great example for transgender people who strive to achieve their dreams.

Prathika Yashini, is a trans woman from Salem, Tamil Nadu. She had a very difficult childhood; her parents often took her to temples and hospitals to cure her gender incongruity. After completing her undergraduation she ran away to Chennai and joined the group of hijras. At the age of 25, she applied for the post of Sub-inspector in Tamil Nadu Uniformed Services Recruitment Board (TNSURB). Her application was rejected stating that she did not fall under the proper gender category. Prathika filed a series of petitions in Madras High Court. The verdict came in favour for her. The court ordered her to clear all the written and physical tests which she did. The Madras High Court further directed the TNUSRB to include transgender people as a 'third category', apart from 'male' and 'female'. After a long struggle Prathika Yashini was appointed as Sub-inspector of Police in Dharmapuri district in Tamil Nadu on April 2017.

In the Indian constitution, trans people are exempted from inheriting many basic rights and civil liberties. The Indian Penal Code (IPC) under Section 10 defines man and woman. The term 'man' denotes a male human being of any age and the term 'woman' denotes a female human being of any age. It is not mentioned where transgender individuals will fit in. The category of third sex/gender needs to be

specifically incorporated into the 'definition of person' so that all citizens can be equally protected under law. Especially the trans community is vulnerable and seriously lagging behind on human development indices mainly in the areas of education and employment. Majority of the people who belong to this community are either not educated or less educated due to which they are not able to participate fully in social, cultural, political, and economic activities. Many factors stand responsible for the low level of education in trans individuals; exclusion from family, society, educational institutions, poverty, social stigma, violence, sexual abuse, and discrimination. The community needs to be included in the mainstream development program of the country and be protected from all forms of abuse and exploitation.

After an uphill struggle, the transgender community in India received few privileges. The decade long fight of All India Hijra Kalyan Sabha, all trans individuals got the right to vote with a proper identification. In 2008, Tamil Nadu government established the Transgender Welfare Board which officially admits trans children in the educational institutional of the state. The state further introduced Transgender Welfare Policy, which allowed male to female trans individuals a free access to sex reassignment surgeries at government hospitals. The policy includes free housing programs, easy access to citizenship documents, admission in government colleges with full scholarships for higher studies, and self-help groups for an alternative income other than begging and sex work.

The government of West Bengal announced the formation of a Transgender Development Board. The Honorable Supreme Court has passed a rule in 2014, stating that transgender community must be recognized as the third gender sex in all government documents and mainly the community eligible for reservations under Other Backward Class in education and job opportunities. The government of

Chhattisgarh has started sex reassignment facility for transgender people. They are actively working for the socio- economic development of the trans community.

On twenty- fourth April 2015, the upper house of Indian parliament Rajya Sabha passed the ‘Transgender Persons Bill, 2014’ guaranteeing rights and entitlements, reservations in education and job vacancies (two percent reservation in government jobs), legal aid, pensions, employment allowances, and skill development courses for transgender individuals. It is to be noted that most of the adolescents and young adults are emotionally and financially dependent on their parents. Gender incongruent children face rejection widely from families hence from both constitutional and human rights perspective, the protection of transgender rights and security become highly crucial. Since they belong to the most backward and marginalized sectors of modern society, constitutional safeguards should be provided to allow them freedom of expression, right to education, right against exploitation, and the right to empowerment. It is important to note that state governments and union territories should constitute territorial welfare programmes for the upliftment of transgender community.

Gender is identified, organized, and recognized differently in each culture.

In Western countries like Europe and America, the access to education, health care, and employment for non- binary gender people are much more flexible compared to India. Many notable transgender activists and writers have contributed to the society to create an inclusive environment for the third genders. Jennifer Finney Boylan is an author, political activist and professor of English at Colby College in Maine. Her autobiography, *She is Not There: A Life in Two Genders* (2003), was the first book by a transgender American to become a best seller. In 2013 Boylan was chosen as the first transgender co-chair of GLAAD’s (Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) National Board of Directors.

Billy Martin, known professionally as Poppy Z Brite, is an American transgender author. She initially achieved fame in the gothic horror genre of literature in the early 1990's after publishing a string of successful novels and short story collections. Brite's recent work has moved into the related genre of dark comedy, with many works set in New Orleans restaurant world.

Stephen Thomas Whittle is a United Kingdom activist with the transgender activist group Press for Change. Since 2007, he has been professor of Equalities Law in the School of Law at Manchester Metropolitan University. Between 2007 and 2009, he was the president of World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH). A British female-to-male (FTM) transsexual, he is described as 'a radical lesbian before his sex change and now a leading commentator on gender issues', who after the Gender Recognition Act 2004 came into force in April 2005, achieved legal recognition as man.

The aim of this research is to identify the social, psychological, and cultural indifferences faced by transgenders across the world and bring out a change in the notions of readers. Trans people are often ridiculed and criticized for their mannerisms and behavioural patterns. But not everyone is aware of the insecurities and trauma they underwent which made them to exhibit anger and frustration in a heteronormative society. The primary sources taken for study are *I Am Vidya: A Transgender's Journey* (2007) by Living Smile Vidya, *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story* (2010) by A. Revathi, *Redefining Realness: My Path to Womanhood, Identity, Love and So Much More* (2014) by Janet Mock, *Both Sides Now: One Man's Journey Through Womanhood* (2006) by Dhillon Khosla, and *Once a Girl, Always a Boy: A Family Memoir of a Transgender Journey* (2020) by Jo Ivester. The pronouns used in the thesis are also used according to the gender of the characters. Till the sex reassignment surgery or

transition the characters are identified as male and after the surgery or transition they are referred to with the feminine pronouns.

Literary research was carried out to see what others have seen and to think what nobody has yet thought about. The review of literature on select primary sources is as follows

D. Kiruthiga in her article “Existence cataclysm in A. Revathi’s Autobiography *The Truth About Me: A Hijras Life Story*” analyse the third gender identity in a heteronormative society. The paper focuses on the hurdles faced by transgender individuals in the daily lives.

Gayathri Devi’s “Truth Unmasked: A Reading on A. Revathi’s *The Truth About Me*” traces the diverse narrative with deep political impressions. The article traces the existence and history of trans community since ancient times. Devi highlights the longings of Revathi, at the same time the problems that she has to face as a trans woman from a binary gendered society.

Cauveri B in her thesis “A Study of The Lives of Transgender Women in *I Am Vidya: A Transgender’s Journey, Truth about Me: A Hijira Life Story, Crossing: A Memoir* and *No Man’s Land*” traces the etymology, history and social positioning of people with gender incongruence. This research has attempted to venture into queer literature to get a glimpse of the lives of transgenders in India and in the West.

Manjeet Rathee’s “Exploring Transgender Sexuality and Agency in A. Revathi’s autobiography *The Truth About Me*” interrogates the crucial issues related to the sexuality of a transgender and the courage depicted by Revathi in countering and resisting the horrors that a 'hijra' was forced undergo violence by family members,

sexual assaults and tortures by police, and repeated displacements in an effort to find real love and lead a life of dignity.

Aravindh Muthusamy in his article “Struggles and Transformation of a Transgender in *I Am Vidya*” attempts to bring out the struggle and difficulties faced by Living Smile Vidya in her autobiography. The paper delineates the harassments Vidya faced during and after her transition. The researcher highlights the brutal violence heaped upon trans women in India.

The research article “Unveiling the Crisis of Transgender in India: A Study of Living Smile Vidya's Autobiography” by Subapriya Kannan traces the socio-economic conditions of Indian trans community. The article further analyses transgender laws and rights passed by the Supreme Court of India.

“Strategic Essentialism: A Maneuver of Voiceless” by T.Thamizharasi analyses the marginalization faced by transgender people globally. The paper deploys strategic essentialism as a device for the amelioration of the transgender community through Janet Mock’s *Redefining Realness: My Path to Womanhood, Identity, Love and So Much More*.

Sociological Theory: A Book of Readings by Lewis A. Coser’s and Bernard Rosenberg and *A Scientific Aspect of Transgenders* by Ajay Majumder and Rabin Tarafder delineate the life of marginalized people in society. The researcher could learn the analytical and fundamental aspects of the third gender community.

Cathy Caruth’s *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* and Karen Horney’s *Our Inner Conflicts* deals with human psychology especially the significance of love, acceptance, and Identity. The books give a deep understanding

about trauma and its implications in life. The researcher has gained knowledge about psychoanalysis and neurotics.

Transgender Challenges in India by S. Nanjundaswamy and M.R Gangadhar and *Transgendered People of India: Forsaken Tributaries* by Yulia Yu. Sakurazawa deals with the culture, heritage, and livelihood of Indian transgender community. As there is only limited books available based on Indian trans culture, the above mentioned sources assisted in acquiring knowledge about the community.

O Au No Keia: Voices From Hawai'i's Mahu and Transgender by Andrew Matzner and *Polynesian Gender Liminality Through Time and Space* by Niko Besnier speak about the Polynesian culture of the third gender. The books render vast information about mahu, mahuwahine, and Fa'afafine of Hawaiian islands.

Becoming a Visible Man by Jamison Green and *FTM: Female- to- Male Transsexuals in Society* by Aaron Devor talks about trans men, their history, transition, surgeries they undergo, and societal inclusion. The visibility rate of trans men are low compared to that of trans women. The books proved useful in learning about the needs and challenges faced by trans men in society.

Autobiography as a literary genre is an individual's narrative about his/her own life, weaved through time and memory. Struggling between truthfulness and fictionality, between self- deception and self- consciousness, the field of writing as narrative of the self is more of a formation of personality than anything else.

Transgender autobiographies and memoirs consist of narratives that not only articulate, but also seek to empower the transgender or transsexual narrative voice. Personal narratives become an empowering tool for trans people; it further acts as a political discourse. Few decades back many trans people preferred to their gender

identity under folds fearing shame, guilt, and abuse. Trans narratives helps them to overcome those hurdles to an extent and create a new life free from social constraints.

Transgender narratives centers not only on the body but the soul. With sexual transformations playing an important role in the course of writing, their words acts as tools to negotiate with their identities, defying the social norms with their non-heteronormative behaviour, as well as trying to acclimatize oneself with the newly found identity and empowerment. They read and write with their own body, with a raging desire to be heard and accepted. The stories which were narrated through the trans individual's own recounting of lived experiences aim at social acceptance, as throughout history the trans community have been acutely marginalized. It is their fight for basic human rights and freedom to be their own selves which is denied for no flaw of their own.

A. Revathi is a Bangalore based trans writer and an ardent activist for sexual minorities. She is a trans woman who belongs to the Indian hijra community. Revathi was assigned as a male at birth and was named Doraisamy by her parents. During childhood Doraisamy preferred the company of girls than boys of his own age. Around boys he felt uncomfortable and insecure. He loved to dress up in his sister's clothes and adorn with his mother's jewels. His effeminate ways was always a matter of ridicule and gossip. Doraisamy was traumatic about his gender incongruity. He felt trapped inside a male body while his soul was purely feminine. His family was totally unaware of gender variations and the psychological issues of the third gender so in the beginning they thought Doraisamy was making up stories and as days passed they started to think that he was possessed by some evil spirits. At school, students physically and mentally harassed him regularly. When he tried to complain his teachers took the side of the other boys and reprimanded Doraisamy for his feminine

nature. All this personal and social hardships affected his academic performance and he failed the tenth grade. His brothers thrashed him mercilessly and made him to do tedious work with them.

Doraisamy got a chance to meet other hijras which was a turning point in his life. They took him to a hijra union where Doraisamy met his tribe and felt included without any bias. There Doraisamy was rechristened Revathi, and became a 'chela', meaning daughter or disciple in hijra terms to an elder trans woman. Upon knowing this Revathi was abused verbally and physically by her family. Unable to bear the pain she ran away to Delhi and lived with her Guru. There she learned the hijra customs and rituals. Within a few years she underwent the sex reassignment surgery and felt elated to be a complete woman. Revathi realized that her community was ostracized by the mainstream society and leading the life as a trans woman was not easy. She had to take up several odd jobs for survival including begging, sex work, dancing at weddings, and temple festivals.

Revathi joined an NGO called Sangama, which served as a platform for the LGBT and other gender non-confirmed people to get awareness about their legal rights, health related issues, and also a place to express their self without being judged. Revathi left begging and sex work to lead a dignified life which she always dreamt of. She started as a peon in that NGO and with dedication and hard work she rose to position of Director in that organization. Revathi published her first book in Tamil, titled *Unarvum Uruvamum*, in 2004. It is a collection of real life incidents of trans people in South India. She wanted to share her experiences to the world to create awareness about the perils faced by trans community in India. Revathi published her second book, an autobiography titled *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story* in the year 2010. The manuscript was written in Tamil and it was translated to English by

V Geetha, a feminist historian. Revathi deliberately published her autobiography in English for she has mentioned about her family members and they are not affluent in the language. She was afraid of their reaction towards her after publication.

Eventually she was convinced and later published the book in Tamil as *Vellai Mozhi* in 2011. *The Truth about Me: A Hijra Life Story* is the unflinchingly courageous and moving autobiography of a hijra who fought ridicule, persecution, and violence both within her home and outside to find a life of dignity. American College in Madurai has included Revathi's autobiography as a part of their Third gender literature syllabus. Her name is written next to Maya Angelou and Toni Morrison in the Columbia University Wall.

Living Smile Vidya is an Indian trans woman, writer, assistant director, and an activist for transgender and Dalit rights. Vidya was born in Trichi, a district in Tamil Nadu as a boy and was called Saravanan. His father Ramasamy was a sweeper and mother Veeramma was a home maker. Saravanan excelled in his academics and his parents dreamt of making him an IAS officer. But the unfortunate death of Veeramma left Saravanan devastated. Since childhood Saravanan had an inclination towards girl's attire and cosmetics. It gave him immense pleasure while looking at the mirror wearing his sister's skirt, her accessories, and a false braid made of towel. His father and neighbours scolded him for being effeminate. Saravanan underwent several insults and beatings from his family and teachers. Whenever he tried to explain his condition people mistook him and called him obscenities. This continued for years and unable to bear the physical and mental agony Saravanan left his house and joined the hijra community in Pune. There he decided to change his sex and thus Saravanan transformed to Vidya. Life after sex change was hard and complicated for Vidya. She encountered ridicules, discrimination, verbal, and physical harassments. Vidya

decided not to do sex work so she took begging for livelihood. Even though a post graduate and rank holder, Vidya could not escape the peril of being subjugated by the heteronormative society. Vidya joined an NGO and started her activism for the marginalized in the society.

Autobiography is an art of expression of oneself. It helps an individual to pour out the thoughts and experience from the heart. And on the other hand, in case of subordinate groups it serves as a testimony. The status of an autobiography gets elevated when it addresses the issue of the marginalized. This kind of records also purges one's heart and lights humanitarian sense. While narrating the incidents the narrator has to relive the experiences once again either it is positive or negative. Trans narratives acts as a means to cope with the trauma of self-realization and social acknowledgement, trying to accustom with their past and future. Performativity is generally associated with the body, in terms of body art, queer aesthetics, and cross-dressing. But gender performativity has not been addressed in terms of writing. Autobiography gives space to the personal experiences and emotions. Vidya was persistent in creating a change for her community. She published her autobiography *I Am Vidya: A Transgender's Journey* in the year 2013. The book addresses the basic needs and struggles faced transgender community in India.

In *I Am Vidya: A Transgender's Journey* Vidya expressed herself honestly, without any fear for the society. She was physically and mentally abused by people she met during the course of her transformation, only a few supported her decision on sex change and helped her in life. The book is divided into fifteen chapters. It opens dramatically and runs with a flash back technique of narration. *I Am Vidya: A Transgender's Journey* is a compelling narrative about a trans woman who fought against all the odds in a transphobic society. This is a story of extraordinary courage and perseverance.

Janet Mock is an American writer, director, producer, television host, and transgender rights activist. Mock was born a boy, to an Afro- American father and a native Hawaiian mother in Honolulu. They named their son Charles and expected him to grow up as sturdy young man. But Charles felt feminine since childhood. He loved being admired by boys older than his age always looked up for their attention. The lack of awareness about gender spectrum and orientation left Charles confused about his emotions and thoughts. It was after an encounter with Wendi, a trans woman that Charles understood his identity. He came out as a trans to his family and insists them to call by the name Janet Mock thereafter and use female pronouns. Assigned male at birth, Mock started her transition as a freshman in high school. To meet the medical expenses she took up sex work. After saving enough money she underwent sex reassignment surgery in Thailand at the age of eighteen. Mock was persistent about continuing her studies and earned a Bachelor's degree in Fashion Merchandising from the University of Hawaii at Manoa in 2004 and a Master's degree in Journalism from New York University in 2006.

After graduating from New York University, Mock started her career as a staff editor at *People* magazine for more than five years. She publicly came out as a trans woman in 2011 and became a media advocate for trans people like her. *Redefining Realness: My Path to Womanhood, Identity, Love and So Much More* is first book published by Janet Mock in the year 2014. The narrative portrays the journey of a young and naïve child with gender incongruity to a strong and confident trans woman. The book opens with a scene of Mock revealing her identity to Aaron, her boyfriend. She wanted to be true in a relationship but was unsure of how Aaron would react after knowing that she is a trans woman. She weaved a flash back technique to narrate her story. Aaron left the place after realizing her identity and there was an eight month

gap between him and Mock. But Aaron went back to her, they reconciled and moved together. The book ends with Mock sharing her perception about LGBT representation in media and the importance of trans visibility. Mock published her second book in 2017, titled *Surpassing Certainty: What My Twenties Taught Me* as a sequel to her first memoir. In this book she describes the events happened in her twenties.

Trans is an umbrella term which denotes trans women as well as trans men. Like trans women, trans men are individuals who were unable to align with the sex assigned at birth. During the course of time they transition to their desired gender identity. Dhillon Khosla is a former federal attorney, activist and writer. He identifies himself as a trans man. He was born in Brussels, Belgium to an East Indian father and German mother. Khosla was born as a girl and was named Asha Khosla. During childhood Asha thought that she is a boy and would grow into a man. As years rolled over she started to hit puberty and that is when problems started. Asha never wanted slender legs, thin hips, and breasts and could not accept the changes happening to her body. She moved to America and lived there with short hair and wearing men's clothes. For years she could not completely realize her gender identity. Eventually one day her ex- girlfriend showed him an article about a trans man and explained that she is one. That was the moment of realization for Asha Khosla to achieve her dreams. Hormone therapies were started and she requested others not to call as Asha but as Dhillon Khosla for was the man Asha was transitioned into.

Khosla records his transition journey including all the intricate details as a book titled *Both Sides Now: One Man's Journey Through Womanhood*. Khosla openly discusses about how he felt while living in a female body with attributes of a man. He has used italicized anecdotes to share his profound insights about gender

incongruity and transitioning. Ultimately *Both Sides Now: One Man's Journey Through Womanhood* is a story that makes the readers to understand what self-love truly means and the necessity to develop the willingness to turn away from the dissenting criticisms that are raised an individual's choice of living.

Jo Ivester is an author, speaker, LGBTQ activist, and above all a proud mother of a trans man. Her first book *The Outskirts of Hope: A Memoir of The 1960s Deep South* was published in 2015 and was highly welcomed among readers. The story is about her family's experiences during the Civil Rights Movement in America. Her second book titled *Once a Girl, Always a Boy: A Family Memoir of a Transgender Journey* records the transition of her son Jeremy as a trans man. Jo Ivester is a mother of four children, but her third born daughter Emily Ivester was different from the other three. Even as a child Emily preferred the company of boys over girls and loved to wear her elder brother Ben's clothes. Jo and her husband Jon thought that she will outgrow these characteristics and preferences but they were wrong. Emily showed distaste in her femininity. At first she assumed that she was gay but later on realized her gender identity and opened up to her family. Jo and Jon were shocked at the revelation but decided to love their child without any bias.

The whole family supported Emily's transition; one of the most crucial periods in a transgender individual's life. Jo never left Emily's side during the sex reassignment surgeries and even rechristened her child as Jeremy Ivester. As the title implies *Once a Girl, Always a Boy: A Family Memoir of a Transgender Journey* is a family's demonstration of love and acceptance. Jeremy Ivester currently resides in Dallas, Texas and he is a transgender activist and spokesperson to the minority communities.

Ajay Majumder was born in Bongaon city, West Bengal, India. He was interested learning about transgenders and other parallel sexual communities of India. He conducted an extensive study on transgender community all over the world. He published his first book in 1997 and three more books following that in the same subject. Majumder researched tirelessly for the last twenty seven years to decipher the unknown facts about the trans community. Rabin Tarafder is an essayist, writer, and activist was also from Bongon City in West Bengal. He has always been enthusiastic to learn about the life and working patterns of transgenders. Tarafder is a keen observer of societal happenings and always tried to give a multi-dimensional approach and wrote what he perceived. Through his writings and activism he tries making the marginalized community aware of the rights and laws the government has offered.

A Scientific Aspect of transgenders (2019) is co-authored by Ajay Majumder and Rabin Tarafder. The book is a result of an analytical and fundamental study of the transgender community. *A Scientific Aspect of transgenders* covers the everyday life, their problems, livelihood, language, social position, customs, and rituals of transgender people. Transgenders are also a part of the society and they have every right to enjoy the liberties available to a cisgenders person. Majumder and Tarafder stress the fact that trans community is also an unavoidable strata in the social order. Transgender people face discrimination and subjugation in family, educational institutions, and work places till date. They are blamed and ostracized for their effeminate behaviour and many trans people are thrown out of their houses. There still exists a superstitious belief that having a trans person in family would bring bad luck. Majumder and Tarafder further explain the power structure that prevails the trans community. Information about lesbian, gay, bisexual, and intersex people in a separate unit.

Karen Horney was a German writer and psychoanalyst who practiced in United States. Through her theories she questioned some of Sigmund Freud's traditional views. She found feminist psychology in response to Freud's theory of penis envy. She contradicted with Freud about the inherent differences in the psychology of men and women, and she tried to trace such differences to society and culture rather than viewing it up as a biological constraint. Some critics label her as a neo- Freudian. Horney was different from other psychoanalysts of her time. She studied neurosis in a different light and she compiled a detailed theory, substantiating with data from her patients. Her contemporaries believed that neurosis is a severe mental conditions and a negative malfunction of the mind in response to external stimuli but Horney differed with their opinion and argued that neurosis is a continuous process that occurs periodically in an individual's life.

Horney advocated the Psychoanalytic Social Theory in her book *Our Inner Conflicts: A Constructive Theory of Neurosis* (1945) which she state that social and cultural conditions, especially childhood experiences are largely responsible for shaping the personality of an individual. She believed that people who suffer from basic anxiety would have longed for love and affection during their childhood but was denied due to various circumstances thus developing a basic hostility towards parents. As a consequence they suffer from basic anxiety. According to Horney, she believed that each individual begins his/her life with the potential for healthy development but it needs favorable conditions such as warm, affectionate and loving environment for feeling safety and satisfaction for a healthy growth. Unfortunately a multitude of adverse influences may interfere with these favorable conditions and primary among those was the parental indifference, that is, parents' inability or unwillingness to provide warmth, love and affection to their children. This indifference is communicated by the

parents through some gestures such as direct and indirect dominance, lack of respect for child's needs, lack of warmth, neglecting to fulfill promises, over indulgence or rejection, isolation of children of one's age group, preference for one child over another, making fun of child's thinking and blaming a child for what they have not done. Horney termed parental indifference as the basic evil as it threatens the child's sense of safety and security. The basic evil naturally instigates feelings of resentment and anger, a response called as basic hostility. However, children seldom overtly express their hostility, as they are completely dependent on their parents for survival. Instead, they inhibit their hostility towards their parents.

Horney claimed that a child exposed to an unsupportive, uncaring and hostile environment develops strategies to cope with the basic anxiety that such environments produce. According to her, this basic anxiety is solved in one of three different ways; hostility, isolation, and helplessness. Horney theorized that people combat basic anxiety by relying on the three fundamental styles of relating to others; moving towards people, moving against people and moving away from people. Neurotic's compulsive behavior generates a basic intrasychic conflict that may either take the form of idealized self-image or self-hatred. The idealized self- image is expressed in three different ways; neurotic search for glory, neurotic claims, and neurotic pride. And self- hatred is expressed as either self-contempt or alienation from the self. Horney's Psychoanalytic Social Theory stresses the importance of giving proper love and attention to children during their childhood. Discipline should be maintained but not vigorously. Above all, children should feel the sense of security and affection inside their homes irrespective of gender or gender identities.

Yulia Yu. Sakurazawa is a Japanese writer who has been publishing transgender and LGBT novels since 1998. She lived in New Jersey for eight years and

currently resides in Chiba, a Tokyo suburb. Sakurazawa is a top selling writer of LGBT and transgender novels in Japan. She has published 85 novels in Japanese language and 90 novellas in English. Her genre of writings includes romance, dystopian/ fantasy, paranormal, and science- fictions. Mostly all her novels, has transgender characters or LGBT episodes. Most of her works are published in Amazon Kindle store. Sakurazawa published *Hijra, The Third Gender* a series that consists of eight stories. She also published a non- fiction titled *Transgendered People of India: Forsaken Tributaries* (2015). Sakurazawa loves travelling and once she came to India and happened to meet trans women wearing colourful clothes and dancing. She was fascinated by their appearance and wanted to know about their life style. She decided to research the life of Indian hijras. Being a foreigner and staying with the hijra community was not easy as she thought. She had to face many hurdles but learned a great deal about them. She witnessed their rituals and took part in gatherings. Mostly trans people do not allow outsiders to participate or witness in their rituals and customs but they trusted Sakurazawa and let her study their culture.

Transgendered People of India: Forsaken Tributaries is a firsthand experience of the author with hijras. She elaborately described how she encountered hijras for the first time and how she was reprimanded for that by her Indian friends and their family. She explains her findings about the trans community and provide intricate details about their customs and rituals. She ends her book by detailing the miseries faced by trans people with a plea to the mainstream society to accept them and love them without prejudices.

Niko Besnier is a Professor of Cultural Anthropology at the University of Amsterdam and Adjunct Professor in the Department of Social Inquiry at La Trobe University, Melbourne. He was born in Algeria, and was brought up in Spain and

Britain. He is a citizen of the United States, New Zealand, and France. He has conducted extensive field research in the Pacific, principally on Nukulaelae Atoll, Tuvalu, where he has spent a total of four years since 1979, as well as Tonga, where he began fieldwork in 1977. He has also conducted field research in Japan and the United States. From 2016 to 2019, he was editor-in-chief of *American Ethnologist*. He currently serves on the editorial boards of a dozen journals and book series in anthropology, gender & sexuality studies, Pacific Island studies, sport studies, and linguistics. Besnier's work *Polynesian Gender Liminality Through Time and Space* (1994) describes the trans gender culture in Hawaii. Polynesian trans women were called 'Mahu', which means men with feminine characteristics. He explains the 'Polynesian Liminality' and how non- binary people live in Hawaii.

Aaron H. Devor is a Canadian trans man, sexologist, sociologist, and well renowned for his research in trans sexuality and transgender communities. Since 1989 has been teaching at University of Victoria and is currently Research Chair in Transgender Studies. Devor earned a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from York University and a Masters' Degree in Communication from Simon France University in 1985. Devor transitioned as a trans man at the age of fifty- one.

The visibilities of trans men are low compared to that of trans women. Not many resources or literary texts are available to explain their transition experiences, societal status and person perils. *FTM: Female-to-Male Transsexuals in Society* (1997) provide an in depth knowledge about female-to-male trans people. Devor has included as case study of forty five trans men in his book. After the introduction which discusses the historical and theoretical contexts of trans men, the author gives a detailed account about understanding female-to-male trans sexualism. He substantiates his findings with his subject's life experiences as illustrations. *FTM: Female-to-Male Transsexuals in*

Society exemplifies the importance of familial relationship for children with gender incongruity.

The second chapter “Social Dynamics of Gender” analyses the sociological constraints faced by transgenders in the society. The problems they face in their day to day life are highlighted in the chapter. The lack of awareness about the third gender is the primary cause for discrimination towards trans community. The binary gender ideologies are deep rooted in the heteronormative society in a way that people are afraid to accept anyone who does not fit under the cisnormative umbrella. The chapter also emphasizes on the importance of creating an inclusive environment for transgender community by unlearning the ingrained binary notions. The study is validated through the concepts in *A Scientific Aspect of Transgenders* by Ajay Majumder and Rabin Tarafder.

The third chapter “Pain and Stigma- A Psychological Overview” deals with the significance of love and acceptance in a person’s life. Every child born in this world deserves to be loved, cared, and accepted by parents, family members, and society irrespective of caste, creed, race, or gender. Individuals who lack the love and affection in their childhood develop a basic hostility towards their parents and as a consequence, suffer from anxiety. The German psychoanalyst Karen Horney’s Psychoanalytic Social Theory is applied to understand the emotional turmoil faced by individuals with gender incongruity during their childhood. The chapter highlights the emotions of grief and despair underwent by the authors and accentuates the need to be empathetic towards the trans community rather than disparaging them for their identity.

Every community in the world follows certain beliefs, codes of conduct, rituals, and customs. The transgender community is of no exception when it comes to culture and heritage. Rituals and customs may vary according to the place of living but the trans

community embraces their kind with harmony and love. The fourth chapter “Transgender Culture and Heritage Across Nations” put emphasis on the affluent transgender culture across various nations. The Indian memoirs by A. Revathi, and Living Smile Vidya are analyzed with Yulia Yu. Sakurazawa’s *Transgendered People of India: Forsaken Tributaries*, Janet Mock’s narrative which explores the Hawaiian culture is reviewed through Niko Besnier’s *Polynesian Gender Liminality Through Time and Space*, and the American Female-to- Male trans narratives by Dhillon Khosla and Jo Ivester are validated through *FTM: Female- to- Male Transsexuals in Society* by Aaron Devor.

The fifth chapter “Writing as Therapy” focuses on the narrative styles and techniques of the primary sources taken. A detailed analysis is done on the structure followed by the authors. Victims of physical and psychological trauma tend to devise a resistive strategy to deviate their minds off the agony. This chapter highlights how the authors used writing as a therapy to overcome their horrendous memories of the past.